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SUDAN NOTES & RECORDS

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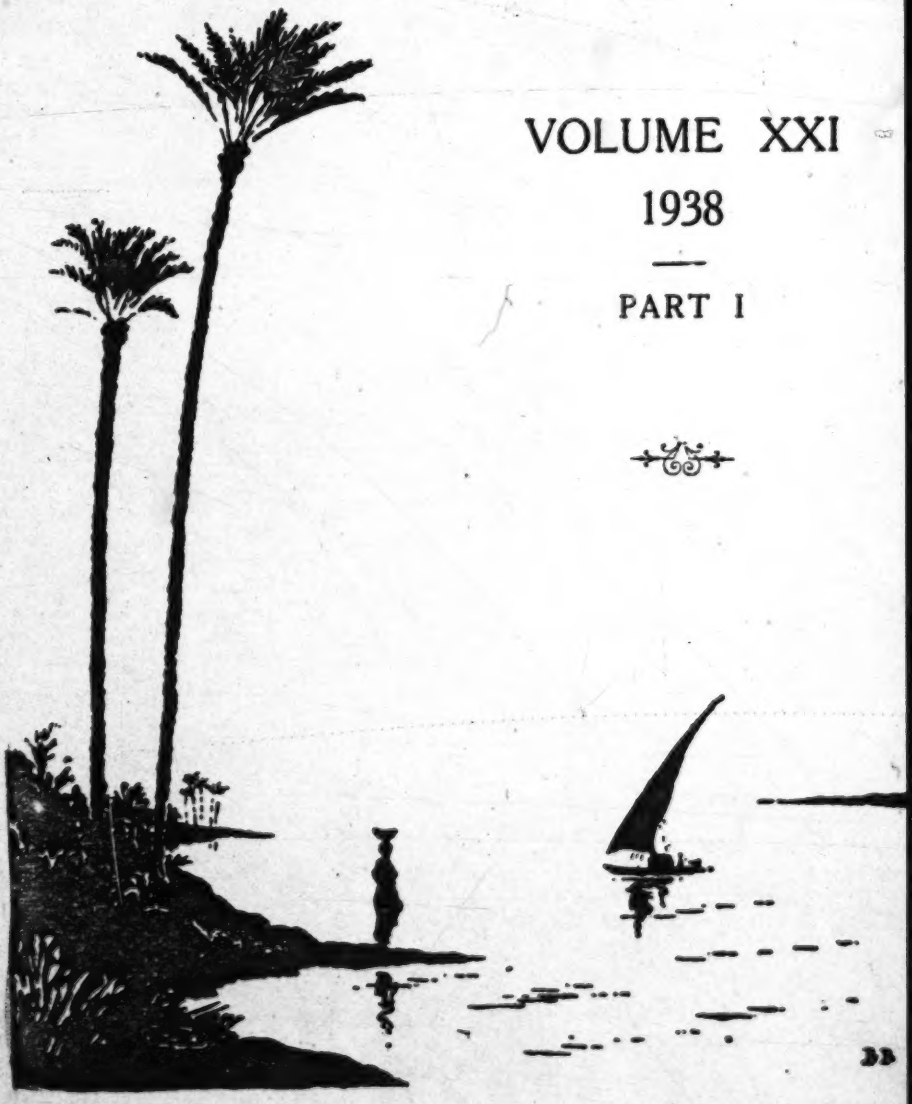

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PART I

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ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE NUER : CATTLE.

By E. E. Evans Pritchard.

II.

621 The chief characteristices of Nuer social life can be understood only when their pastoral activities are viewed in relation to the country in which they live. Social instutitions are to a large extent a function of this dynamic relationship between mode of livelihood and environment. I have said something about cattle and the esteem in which Nuer hold them. I will now say something about the country in which these cattle have to be maintained.

186 133 From the European's point of view Nuerland has no favourable qualities, unless its severity be counted such, for its endless marshes and wide savannah plains have an austere monotonous charm. It is throughout hard on man and beast, being for most of the year either a swamp or a parched and waterless tract. Trekking across the Nuer plains is a great weariness to body and spirit. But Nuer do not share this opinion. They think that they live in the finest country on earth, envying no people their heritage, and, it must be admitted, for herdsmen their country has many admirable features. It provides pasturage all the year round and absence of forest prevents the encroachment of tsetse. I have long since given up trying to convince Nuer that there is any country more suited for cattle husbandry than their own, an attempt more useless since a few Nuer have been taken to Khartoum, a place they consider to be the home of all white men. Having seen the desert scrub which surrounds Khartoum they are confirmed in their opinion that their own land is superior to ours.

134 The grasses upon which depends the welfare of the herds depend, for existence in their turn, on soil and water. The soils of Nuerland are heavy clays which look very much alike to me and which are equally unpleasant to walk on in the dry season, when they are broken by the sun into deep cracks, and in the wet season when they form

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134 sticky water-laden mud. The clayey plains are broken by occasional sandy ridges and knolls upon which the débris of years of occupation has accumulated. However, Nuer distinguish between the black
134 soil, of such areas as Eastern Jikany country, which they call *mun*
823 *mi car* or *dök* and the more sandy soil, which is found, for example, in parts of Lou country, and which they call *mun lita*. The black heavy clays are more suitable for cultivation of millet because they hold up rain water, but they are bad for cattle which in the rains have to struggle through the sticky mud and to eat the high coarse grasses which such soil nurtures rather than the sweeter short grasses which prevail on more sandy soils. Thus the Lou people say in favour of their country " Our cattle do not come back each day from grazing caked in mud but they return with clean hooves." On the other hand the more sandy parts of Lou country, *e.g.*, near Muot Dit, do not hold up rain water which makes cultivation of millet difficult so that even a slight drought destroys the young plants, and often makes it necessary for the people to wander early and far from
[135] their villages in the dry season to obtain sufficient pasturage. There are no salt-licks in Nuerland.

[133] Surface water comes partly from direct rainfall over Nuerland and partly from the flooding of the principal rivers which traverse it
132 and which derive most of their water from rainfall elsewhere. In an average year the rains commence in April and continue till the end of October. Towards the middle or end of April a few showers come down and the sky is overclouded. It is not till the end of May that the rains set in with a will. July and August are the months with heaviest rainfall and the weather is cool, even cold in the mornings and evenings and a south-westerly wind prevails. The sun is overcast during most of the day. Showers become lighter and less frequent in October and by the middle of November have ceased altogether. In November the north wind begins to blow and it blows consistently down the valley of the Nile from the Mediterranean to the Plateau of the Great Lakes till the approach of the next rains. The weather becomes warmer and warmer and from January till March is a great trial to Europeans.

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The mean monthly rainfall up to 1927 is given in millimetres by Hurst and Phillips* for the Bahr el Jebel and Bahr el Ghazal area (Western and part of Eastern Nuerland) and for the Sobat and Baro area (most of Eastern Nuerland) as follows:— 132

	Bahr el Jebel and Bahr el Ghazal		*Sobat and Baro*	
January	4	millimetres.	6	millimetres.
February	13	,,	14	,,
March	38	,,	33	,,
April	92	,,	80	,,
May	131	,,	137	,,
June	134	,,	158	,,
July	161	,,	173	,,
August	168	,,	199	,,
September	145	,,	153	,,
October	112	,,	90	,,
November	43	,,	48	,,
December	8	,,	10	,,
Year	1049	,,	1091	,,

The rainfall is fairly even over the whole of Nuerland. It is not nearly so heavy as it is to the east, on the Abyssinian Plateau, or to the south, in the basin of the Victoria Nile or in the neighbourhood of the Nile-Congo Divide. The effects, however, are felt far more than in these regions because the beds of clayey soil hold up the water and the flatness of the country prevents surface drainage. Moreover, the rivers flood at the same time as the rains pour down and the numerous swampy watercourses which thread their way through Nuerland are prevented from discharging water from their mouths. 132. 133

The whole of Nuerland is an almost dead flat plain, in the main treeless and during the rains covered with high grasses which reach to the waist and, near streams where they are higher and coarser, reach to the shoulders of the tall Nuer. In my experience they grow somewhat higher in Eastern Nuerland than in Western Nuerland. At 133 137

* The Nile Basin by H. E. Hurst and P. Phillips, 1931, Vol. I, p. 47.

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484 At this season of the year[1] traversing open country is always difficult
133 and even along the paths inconvenient, especially as the land is
137 inundated at the same time. One can just see the horns of the great oxen at pasture. Only in the habitual grazing grounds on the slopes of slightly elevated ridges, where the cattle and the close-cropping sheep and goats have kept down the shorter species of grasses, is there any freedom of movement.

137 Nuerland approximately coincides with the extension of true savannah in the Sudan. Here and there are stretches of thornwood forest but they are never extensive. A belt of forest sometimes lines a river where its banks are high, *e.g.*, on the Sobat and along sections of the Bahr el Ghazal and the Bahr el Arab, but it never extends far inland. North of the Sobat, on its lower reaches, true savannah gives way to thorny savannah and beyond the southern extremities of Eastern Nuerland one enters parklike savannah forest which becomes thicker the further south one proceeds, though it always turns to marshland as the Bahr el Jebel is approached. To the south of Western Nuerland one touches the fringes of ironstone country, likewise covered with savannah forest.

Though thornwood forest is found along sections of the rivers, as a rule when they are in flood they have no banks and the country
133 lying on either side of them is swamp. This is especially the case with the whole course of the Bahr el Jebel through Nuerland and the greater part of the Bahr el Ghazal. The Bahr el Zeraf channel is bounded by swamp to a lesser degree and the lower reaches of the Sobat not at all. According to my own observations the area of swamp is smaller than is generally supposed.

This vast plain is threaded with depressions which run in all directions, often crossing one another, and linking up with the main rivers. Where continuous these depressions have the appearance of small rivers, though water seldom flows in them. While rain is falling on the country the main rivers flood into these depressions threading the land with a network of waterways which prevent drainage from the saturated earth so that the rainwater lies every-

[1] [i.e., during the rain season--Analyst]

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where in deep puddles which slowly extend till by the middle of June the whole surface of the country, except for occasional higher land, is under water. Nuerland has then the appearance of a great grass-covered swamp, there being stagnant rivers, lagoons, and pools, wherever there is a depression in the level surface, and islands wherever slightly elevated ridges and knolls rise from the ground. On these elevated spots are perched the Nuer villages.

The rivers begin to fall about the same time as the rains begin to cease. Nuerland then dries quickly. The blazing sun evaporates the surface water while the streams instead of being channels of overflow from the rivers now begin to feed the rivers, and hence drain their basins, as they sink in their beds. The grasses are dry enough by the middle of November for the Nuer to commence to fire them and by the middle of December most of the country has been burnt and the surface is cracked into deep fissures. So parched is it at this season that it is difficult to find enough water for men and herds. The wet and dry seasons are therefore very pronounced in Nuerland.

The main characteristics of the country are (1) that it is dead flat, (2) that it has clayey soils, (3) that it is mainly treeless, (4) that it is covered with high grasses in the rains, (5) that it is subject to a heavy seasonal rainfall, (6) that all its rivers flood, and (7) that when the rains cease and the rivers fall it is subject to a season of severe drought.

A year in which the rivers are low is probably not so serious for the Nuer as a year in which there is little rain. Nevertheless, when the rivers are low the clay beds may not hold up sufficient water to enable the grasses to spring up again after the annual firing, and the inland watercourses, which to a great extent rely for their water on the flooding of the rivers, may fail early in the dry season and compel the people to move to lakes and river banks earlier than they would normally do, and there may also be a shortage of marsh pasturage which is usually the mainstay of the cattle at the end of the dry season. On the other hand, if there is insufficient rain the millet crop dies and the grasses, deprived of subterranean supplies of water, do not spring

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312 up after firing. Therefore, whilst a year of little flooding may cause some inconvenience a year of low rainfall may cause famine. It is probable that years of low rainfall over Nuerland are also years when river water is low, *i.e.*, when the rainfall is low over the whole of North East Africa. The two together may cause Nuer great distress. Similarly, a year of exceptionally high rainfall is probably also a year of high river water and the combination sometimes causes such serious flooding that it is very difficult for the cattle to find pasturage. The hardy millet plant does not seem to be affected by moderate flooding.

133 Such are the general conditions in Nuerland. So important is
312 it to understand these conditions that I may be pardoned for adding some further observations. Most of my sojourn among the Nuer was spent in Lou country or on its confines, and what I write of Lou country applies equally to the whole region between the Nile and the Pibor and to most of the Eastern Jikany area to the north of the Sobat. Lou country is part of the flat plain that lies between the Nile and the foothills of the Abyssinian escarpment. It is bounded to the north by the Sobat River and to the east by the Pibor River. It thus forms part of the basin of the Sobat, which is formed from the junction of the Baro and the Pibor. The water of the Baro comes entirely from the Abyssinian highlands. The water of the Pibor comes mostly from the same region though the river drains also to a lesser degree the northern slopes of the Plateau of the Great Lakes and the Sudan Plains. The Baro is a mountain torrent in the Abyssinian highlands but when it reaches the plains it begins to wind about and form swamps. The three main streams which run from south to north across Lou country, the Nyanding, the Wangnyait, and the Filus, are channels of overflow from the Sobat when it is in flood. It is the same to the north of the Baro-Sobat, in Gaajok country, where, for example, water flows out of the Baro along the Macar stream to lose itself in the vast Macar swamp. Here and there in Lou country are low ridges, some stretching several miles, and on the banks of the Sobat and Pibor are occasional knolls, known in the Sudan as *dabbas*, and on these islands of elevated ground the Nuer

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build their huts and byres. As most of Lou country is under water in the rains they are then literally islands. 133 312

The Sobat begins to rise at the end of April or the beginning of May and it is at its highest when the rains are at their greatest. Water flows over its banks forming lagoons and down the streams which traverse Lou country. According to the Nuer, as the water flows out of the Sobat southwards down these streams it meets the rainwater flowing northwards from their upper reaches. Thus one may observe the Pibor flowing first one way and then the other way. Whilst rainwater pours in numerous small channels into the streams they are discharging water along swampy depressions into the interior of the country.

The amount of surface water in Lou country varies from year to year but in most years it is flooded to several inches deep from July to September. This would not prevent one from trekking, unpleasant experience though it would be, but the depressions which occur at frequent intervals are a more serious obstacle for they necessitate constant wading through deep water. Even at the end of May long treks are more than Europeans care to face—the Nuer themselves move freely at all seasons of the year. Thus, at the end of May, in 1935, I found it a struggle to reach Konye from Akobo though it is only a distance of some ten miles. In July of the same year I was practically imprisoned at Yakwac for water lay everywhere several inches deep at the back of the hamlet and progress through the rank grasses was laborious and even dangerous because it was impossible to detect the deep water-filled holes in which a leg might easily be broken.

Sometimes the inundation reaches the proportions of a flood. Lou Nuer have told me that the Fadang Dinka, who occupied Lou country before the Nuer ousted them, once sustained a season of drought followed by such devastating floods that people lived on the tops of trees and ate leaves. There was great loss of life among the older people. Jackson records that in 1918 "An abnormally high river resulted in the Bahr el Zeraf overflowing its banks and inundating [173]

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133 the country to the east (Gaawar country) to such an extent that a journey which, in the ordinary course of events (in the dry season) 312 is a matter of some inconvenience owing to the uncertainty of finding water, had to be performed for a distance of 80 miles in a canoe. And, in the same year, Nyerol post, thirty five miles to the south of Abwong, on the River Sobat (Lou country), which was usually supplied over a waterless tract (in the dry season) was only with the greatest of difficulty kept in touch with civilization owing to the country in between them being almost entirely under water.*

By November the Sobat has commenced to fall and to drain the streams which serve as its channels of overflow in flood. These streams now contribute to its volume of water with the result that the fall of water at Nasser is registered at the Sobat mouth three weeks or more later.† While the land is being drained by the Sobat the 132 rains have ceased and the sun has evaporated surface water. The grasses are burnt and the country takes on its dry season appearance of a fissured waterless waste. The change from wet-season conditions to dry-season conditions is sudden.

[491] Travelling in February from the Sobat to Pathai and thence 133 eastward to Pul Fadoi, along the newly-made motor road, one traverses 137 slightly higher ground through a thin *heglig* forest which screens the full desolation of the country, for, though in reality it offers scanty 311 shade, it gives an appearance of verdure and freshness, and the ground is carpeted with the oval fawn-coloured fruits of the *heglig*. Game is plentiful and forest pools numerous. But the western part of Lou country, occupied by the Mor tribal section, from Pul Fadoi eastwards for over a hundred kilometres, is bleak and its bleakness is, on the whole, typical of the rest of Lou country and of Nuerland in general. It is thickly covered with dead grasses, from 4 to 8 feet high, except where it has been lately burnt for then one sees only wide stretches of charred earth, fissured into a million fragments, like a gigantic ill-fitting jigsaw puzzle, and strewn with burnt stems of grass and with

* Jackson, *op. cit.*

† Hurst and Phillips, *op. cit.*

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ashes. Where the grasses have been burnt some time ago green shoots have sprung up around the charred stems. Here and there stand isolated, thorny, shadeless trees, stunted by fire and spreading out their black tortured branches. Often no tree is visible in any direction and a desolate waste stretches everywhere to the horizon. The burning of the tall grasses has revealed low termite mounds, blackened by fire like the ground from which they rise. There is smoke and flame where parts of the country are still on fire. This country is uninhabited in the rains, being under water, but in February one sees occasional cattle camps around the deeper pools.

In Western Nuerland conditions are in the main similar though there are certain differences. Western Nuerland lies between the Bahr el Jebel and the Bahr el Ghazal and extends to the north of the Bahr el Ghazal as far as the southern boundary of Kordofan Province. It consists for the most part of 'cotton soil' and like Eastern Nuerland is so dead flat that if one mounts a small termite mound one can see in all directions as far as the eye can reach. Here and there are ridges of higher ground. These village sites are always inland because, whereas the higher banks of the Sobat and Pibor allow occupation here and there, the Bahr el Jebel and the Bahr el Ghazal have no banks in their flood seasons and their beds are bordered by wide marshes. These marshes often run for several miles inland and there are very few spots on the Bahr el Jebel where it is possible to land and penetrate into the interior of the country, even in the dry season.

I have already expressed an opinion that the area covered by swamp vegetation has been exaggerated. That is an empirical judgment. The marsh vegetation, generally referred to as *sudd* in the Sudan, is a solid mass of water plants, the principal among them being papyrus (*cyperus Papyrus*), '*Um sluf*' (*Panicum pyramidale*) and the common reed (*Phragmites Communis*), to which cling a number of swimming plants (*Utricularia, Vallisneria, Azolla, Pistia, Aldrovandia, etc.*). Creepers especially *Vigna Nilotica* and *Ipomaea*, bind the marsh plants together into a tangled mass. Here and there grow patches of ambatch trees.* Lagoons run out of the

* Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, pp. 302-3.

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133 Bahr el Jebel, separated from the river by narrow stretches of papyrus (from river), and they often run parallel to the course of the river.

161 From the deck of a steamer passing down the Bahr el Jebel there is no sign of human occupation and a traveller might judge the country to be without inhabitants. But inland ridges support a [36] large population. These ridges are, as a rule, widely separated and one treks often enough ten to fifteen miles between one village and the next. In places there are broader belts of high ground covered 133 by thick thornwood forest, as in parts of Rengyan country, or wide 137 sandy ridges covered with scrub and palms (*doleib* and *dom*), as in parts of Dok and Rengyan countries. Those used to the bare monotony of Nuerland will be surprised to meet for the first time these sandy stretches which, with the classic beauty of the *dom* palms that surmount them, seem out of place in savannah plains. In the extreme south, in Nyuong country, which I have not visited, the clay runs into the ironstone belt and savannah gives way to savannah forest in which *Anogeissus Leocarpus* predominates. In the north of Western Nuerland, to the north of the Bahr el Ghazal, in Lak and Bul countries, a maze of watercourses and lagoons running in all directions impede progress for the first few miles inland from the river. Then an open treeless plain extends to the borders of Kordofan. Bul country on the lower reaches of the Bahr el Arab is said to be for the greater part under water in the rainy season, though ridges of sand and forest occur on its northern and western limits.

Most of Western Nuerland is under water in the rains and the Bahr el Jebel and the Bahr el Ghazal are practically united by surface water on the intervening plain. Nevertheless the Western Nuer are probably better favoured for village sites than the Eastern Nuer.

I entered Western Nuerland at Adok on October 1st, 1936. This year was drier than usual but in a seventeen days tour round the country we walked almost the whole time in several inches of water and were often up to our armpits when crossing depressions which are constantly met on the route. How laborious such trekking is can

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be imagined when one has to stamp one's way through water for ten miles at a stretch. The rank grasses prevent one from leaving the paths and the paths form miniature depressions down which water flows so that it is like walking in the bed of a tiny stream, a sticky bed where every step requires an effort to extract the foot. Rengyan country is amazing at this season of the year. One walks for miles through water to emerge suddenly on a ridge, screened by high grasses till one begins to mount it. Here is a village. One walks through the village to descend into water the other side, and then through miles of water to the next inhabited island. To live in such a country one should be amphibious, like the Nuer, who seem to be in no way inconvenienced by what are to Europeans appalling conditions.

The rains cease in November but so saturated is the earth that a late heavy shower will again inundate the country for 48 hours.

The dry season among the Western Nuer is not so severe as it is among the Eastern Nuer because there is never a shortage of water and the villages are never far from deep lagoons and streams, nor even from the main rivers themselves with their broad fringe of marshes. It is probably only in an exceptionally dry year that the larger inland watercourses entirely dry up. Probably this is in the main due to the fact that the Bahr el Jebel and the Bahr el Ghazal do not sink in their beds like the Sobat and Pibor, since they are fed by permanently flowing streams and have enormous lake and marsh reservoirs. The water of streams and lagoons in Western Nuerland is therefore not so rapidly drained as in Eastern Nuerland. Certainly the water in big streams in Dok country seems to be permanent and in walking through Lek country as late as February in 1930 we had to wade frequently through deep swampy streams and lagoons.

Nuer have expressions to denote the natural features of their country. A treeless plain they call *ghaw mi dee* or, in contrast to dry elevated ridges, *paw*. A ridge or knoll is called *kuir* and *thur* or, in reference to its suitability for human occupation, *gwaath wec*. Land which is partly inundated in the wet season, but not sufficiently to be called swampy, and is therefore suitable for growing millet, is called

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823 104 *tap*. A big open river is generally called *kir e.g.* the Bahr el Jebel and the Sobat but a river may have its proper name, *e.g.* the Bahr el Ghazal is called Naam. Smaller rivers or streams are denoted by the word *yir*. A marshy depression inland is called *wang* and a big lagoon running out of one of one of the main rivers is called *bar*. A marshy depression running parallel to a river bank is called *tor*. *Toc* are extensive swamps which form the flood plains of rivers.

VIII

311 From my description of their country it will be seen that the Nuer are faced with problems which daunt men better equipped than them. For they are so poor that they have little but their courage and their knowledge to master a harsh environment. Nuer have to consider how to protect and pasture their cattle and also how to grow maize and millet, for they practise both cattle husbandry and hoe-culture and have to take the requirements of both into account. As gardeners their difficulties only arise in the rains for in the dry season nothing will grow in the waterless wastes. As herdsmen there are problems to be solved at all seasons. Gardening will be described later. Here we may consider how Nuer ensure the welfare of their herds by adapting their life to the seasons.

233 361 243 Excess or insufficiency of water is their first problem. It is essential that men and cattle should be protected from the water which covers most of the country in the rains. Cattle get diseases of the hooves and die if they have to stand in water. Protection is given to man and beast by building huts and byres on higher ground. In selecting a village site two considerations must be borne in mind. Firstly there must be a sloping ridge off which rain-water can run to the plain below and this ridge must be broad enough to allow huts and byres to be built and for the cattle to be tethered in the kraals outside the byres. Preferably it should also be broad and long enough to allow the flocks and herds to pasture without having to descend into the inundated plains to graze among the tall rank grasses. Secondly there must be land on one side of the ridge suitable for cultivations, *i.e.*, land which will retain sufficient water for the millet to grow

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but not enough to drown it altogether. The ideal arrangement, which I have often observed among the Western Nuer, is to build on the edge of a whale-backed ridge with the huts and byres facing the broad back of the ridge. This ensures that the cattle will have dry kraals and also permits them to graze on the short grasses of the ridge. At the back of the huts and byres on slightly lower ground are the gardens. These must be on lower ground because the ridge itself is usually sandy and, where occupied, has a hard trodden floor of ashes and debris and is therefore unsuitable for cultivation of millet. They must also be at the back of the huts and byres so that the cattle can move freely to and from their kraals without invading the standing millet. To prevent this happening people erect a thornwood fence between the kraals and the gardens and extend it along both sides of the kraal, so that only the side opening on to the ridge is left unfenced. In Western Nuerland I have seen low mud dykes erected between the flooded plain and the approach to the ridge. These are to prevent the water encroaching too far in years of high flood.

I have sometimes wondered why Nuer so often build their villages on shadeless ridges in the middle of a treeless plain when it would be possible to build in some of the stretches of thornwood or palm forest that one finds here and there in their country. I have often noticed villages built in the open when shady spots are to be found a few hundred yards away. But Nuer can give good reasons for keeping to their dreary sites exposed to the fierce tropical sun and the bitter north wind. In the open their animals are safer from wild beasts; they are less worried by insect pests, and their kraals soon dry after rain. It would appear also that thornwood forest is less suitable for cultivation of millet than more open country. Nevertheless Nuer sometimes build in open forest. I have seen forest villages in parts of Lou and Eastern Gaajok country. The Eastern Gaajok villages, which I have not visited, are mainly in forest country.

Most of these ridges and knolls have probably been occupied for a very long period of time, perhaps long before the Nuer lived in their present home. In digging graves Nuer have found pots and cooking

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stones and remains of fires. They have been occupied by many generations of Nuer. Families are not, however, bound to any particular piece of ground, and move freely when the ground is exhausted and no longer yields a good harvest of millet or rich pasturage for the cattle. A whole village may then move and live elsewhere for some years but sooner or later they will settle there again for it is their birth place. Families and groups of kinsmen will leave a village if there are many deaths, if the cattle are poorly (*he ran giew kä kwi kieth, kä kwi ghok*), or if fights have taken place in the village. Byres and huts generally last about five years and have then to be rebuilt. Gardens are cultivated for as long as ten successive years before they are finally exhausted. When cattle and sheep and goats have grazed on village pastures (*dor*) for about the same length of time the grasses show evident signs of exhaustion. Thus in 1936 the people of Nyueny pointed out to me that after about nine years of occupation their village pastures had been overgrazed and were poor in consequence.

Village sites are owned by certain clans and sections of clans. However, ownership is mainly a matter of sentiment, based on long association between a ridge and a lineage, and since the country is not over-populated and the Nuer do not make very extensive cultivations it never becomes a legal issue. Anyone may settle in a village and the villagers will show him where he may build his huts and byre and cultivate his millet. This practically means that he may build and cultivate anywhere not already in occupation or under cultivation. Nuer are very generous in such matters. In fact, however, a man is usually to settle in a village where he can claim kinship with some of the villagers, *i.e.*, is genealogically attached to the dominant lineage there. *Mar*, kinship, can generally be discovered somewhere and consequently it is usually possible to place all the occupants of a village on a single genealogical chart. There are no real problems of ownership of land among the Nuer.

Some parts of Nuerland are blessed with better village sites than others. Lou country is exceptionally well favoured in this respect though Western Nuerland has many fine ridges. Lou people say that in a year of *nyaor*, or high river-flood, their ridges remain dry

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whereas in a similar year Eastern Gaajok country is under water and cattle have to be sent into Lou country while the men fish from trees. Lou are very scornful of Eastern Jikany village sites. I once asked Wicthiel, who now lives at Mancom in Jikany country, whether he could call his present home a *gwaadh wec* (village site) and he replied "Well, it is what the Jikany call a *gwaagh wec*, but it is not what we consider a *gwaadh wec* in our own country (Lou). They just build their villages in the forest anyhow." Huts built on piles, such as one sees in parts of Dinkaland, are unknown in Nuerland.

Water is as scarce in the dry season as it is excessive in the wet season. About the beginning of December, therefore, the young men and some of the girls take most of the cattle to camps some miles from the villages and leave the rest of the women and the married men to harvest the second millet crop and repair huts and byres. A few lactating cows are left in the village to provide milk for the small children. The cattle are taken to camps partly to give them clean water and partly to pasture them. The grasses are burnt and some species spring up again a few days after they are fired. This is a good time for the cattle because they can move freely, the tall grasses which impeded them in the rains having been burnt, and because they can graze to their hearts' content on the tender young shoots.

Local conditions determine the time of leaving the village. In 1936 the first youths to take their cattle into camp from the village of Nyueny moved on November 13th, at the beginning of the Nuer month of *Kur*. This is much earlier than is usual for most villages and was due to lack of clean water at Nyueny and over-grazing of the pastures in the vicinity. The country around the village was all under water in the middle of October but was parched a month later. Most people do not move till the end of the month of *Kur* or the beginning of the month of *Tiop indit* (about the middle of December).

In Lou country the first camps are often made in thornwood forests near deep pools, but in parts of Nuerland, especially in the

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West, they are often made by streams for fishing. When the second harvest is reaped the cattle are brought back to the village to eat the millet stalks, if the camps are near. As pools dry up, or pasturage is exhausted, or the fishing becomes poor, the young men make new camps and several intermediate camps may be made before they move to their large annual camping grounds at the side of lakes or marshes or on river banks. The early camps are often small, being manned by a few kinsmen but tend to get larger as the season continues and water becomes scarcer. The final camps may contain several hundred persons. By the middle of January the villages in the Lou country are deserted but in areas more favoured with water supplies, for example in Lek country, some of the older people may still be in the villages in the middle of February.

The Lou people stay inland as long as they can and in a wet year may remain inland throughout the dry season. They fall back on the deeper pools, some large enough to be called lakes, which hold up the water in a stream or depression, *e.g.*, at Muŏt tŏt, Muot dit, Fading, Fadoi, Gwonggwong, Yollei, Tepjor and Nyerol. These pools supply them with abundant fish. If forced to leave them the Gun major tribal section moves north to the Sobat and south-west to the flooded plain of the Bahr el Zeraf in the country of the Twic Dinka (for *Twiai*) and the Mor major tribal section moves northeast to the Nyanding river or East to the Geni and Pibor rivers.

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In the old days fighting frequently occurred if the Lou moved to these camping sites because the banks of the Sobat belonged to the Balak people, while occupation of the Geni and Pibor brought them into contact with the Beir and Anuak peoples, and their move to the south-west was trespass on Dinka grazing grounds. Even the lower reaches of the Nyanding river do not belong to the Lou for the Gaajok have their villages along it and have fishing rights in its pools.

The Madjok villagers with whom I camped for several months at Yakwac in 1931 had moved to Pul Teli for an intermediate camp early in December and had reached Yakwac about the middle of

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January. They remained at Yakwac till the beginning of June when they moved back to their village. As the Nuer put it "They started to move in the month of *Tiop indit* and remained *dar* (in between village and river) in the *muth* (second half) of *Tiop indit*, the whole of the month of *Tiop intot* and the *bor* (first half) of the month of *Pet*. In the first half of *Pet* they arrived at the river and remained there till the first half of the month of *Kornyuot*."

The Eastern Jikany have not the same need to move as have the Lou. Nevertheless, all the Gaajok, Gaajak, and Gaagwang tribal sections fall back on rivers before the dry season is far advanced. The three primary tribal sections of the Gaajok move as follows: The Laang concentrate on the Sobat, the Wangkeac move south-east to the banks of the Pibor and Gila, and the Yol either camp southwards near the junction of the Wokau and the Sobat or northwards along the edges of the Macar swamp. The Gaajak primary tribal sections move as follows: The northern Thiang sections (Kang and Luony) go north to the Daga river, the southern Thiang sections (Tar) and the Reng, Nyayan, Wau, and Cany sections camp on the banks of the Baro, Jokau, Adura, and Makwei rivers. The Gaajak camping grounds are mainly in Abyssinian territory.

I do not know anything of the seasonal movements of the Lak, Gaawăr, and Thiang tribes beyond the fact that they fall back on the Bahr el Jebel and the Bahr el Zeraf and on streams flowing into these two rivers.

The Western Nuer mainly camp on inland streams which are no great distance from their villages. The Karlual people mostly concentrate first on the Loogh stream and afterwards on the Cal and Wangtac streams. All these streams join the Bahr el Ghazal. The Dok camp near pools in the bed of the Waard stream. Without attempting to give full details, which indeed I could not furnish, about other dry season encampments among the Western Nuer it may be said that the people of this part of Nuerland do not travel in the dry season on the same scale as the Eastern Nuer, especially the Lou. Some of their earlier camps are made a few hundred yards from the

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villages. In 1936 the people of Puic had formed two camps on the Gany stream which could be seen from the village and were so near that the girls came to the camps twice a day from the village to milk the cattle.

The western Jikany move to the Jikany marshes (*toc Jikany*) at the edge of the Bahr el Ghazal. These flood plains of rivers are the most favoured camping sites because, as the swamps slowly dry up, they provide succulent pasturage for the cattle and there is always sufficient water in their deep depressions. In Lou country there are no big stretches of *toc* such as one finds in the flood plains of the Bahr el Ghazal, the Gila River, the Bahr el Zeraf, and in the Macar swamps.

A village tends to move about the same time and to visit the same pastures each year though time and place are determined to some extent by variations of rainfall and river flooding.

The population of camps varies from about 20 to 100 in the smaller intermediate camps, up to several hundred at the larger camps. That is an approximate estimate based on a limited number of bare observations.

Most of the Nuer are in their big dry season camps by February and remain there till May when the married men and women return to the wet season villages to clear the cultivations and to erect fences and to repair huts and byres. If there is then a temporary drought they may return to the camps. The young men and girls follow with the cattle in May or June according as the rains are early or late. The young men encamped at Yakwac in 1930 left early in June for their inland village of Majok. Those encamped at Konye had left for Fadoi shortly before I visited the village on May 15th in 1935. The young men break up camp as soon as their elders who have preceded them to the village send back a messenger to tell them that the rains have fallen heavily in the interior and that sowing has commenced. Instead of the leisurely journey from villages to the big dry season camps, which may take some six weeks, the journey back to the villages in completed as quickly as possible and takes one or two days according to the distance.

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The word *ghuth* is used to describe these movements. It does not denote a mere journey but implies a change of residence and the movement of cattle and household goods. It is used alike of men who drive the cattle from village to camp, from camp to camp, and from camp to village. It is also used of women who move separately, carrying their milk vessels and other possessions in baskets, for "*kwak cereka ghok*" "Household goods are like cattle." Of the movement from villages to camps one says "*Ce nath ghuth wicni*," "the people have moved into camp" and of the movement from camps back to villages one says "*Ce nath ghuth ciäng*," "the people have moved to the villages."

The Nuer pastoral year may therefore be divided into two main periods, the six wet season months, from June to December, when the people live in their villages, and the six dry season months, from December to June, when they live in camps. The dry season half of the year may be further divided into the earlier part when people are burning the grasses and living in intermediate small camps for a few weeks, and the latter part when they live for several months in large camps near lakes or wells or on the banks of rivers.

IX.

Inland, especially in Lou country, it is usually necessary to dig wells at the height of the dry season. Twenty years ago this was probably more general than it is today, because, as already explained, the main rivers and marshes lay outside Lou territory. Wells are sometimes dug also in Eastern Jikany country.

As the Sobat falls it drains the streams that intersect Lou country and, before long, their water is reduced to occasional pools where the beds are deepest. In the smaller streams these soon dry up and wells are excavated. Capt. H. H. Wilson first drew attention to these wells at Muöt töt (*Amwot el Sogheir*) in 1902 and wrote of them: "Dug on the sandy banks of the khor, their depth varied from 20 to 30 feet, with a diameter of about 2 feet 6 inches. Owing to the solidarity of the ground, the walls of the well stood without much

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312 need of revetting, and great labour must have been expended in their construction. Steps were cut in the wells on opposite sides, to enable a man to descend and ascend."* When I was camped on the Nyanding river in February and March of 1932 only the pools on its lower reaches still contained water, and that was fouled and slimy. Mankac was the last place where there was still surface water to be found. Upstream cattle camps were centred around wells sunk in the beds of the river. The following description was written at Yik.

312 Most of the men leave whatever exhausted pool they have been camped around a few days in advance of the women, and cattle,
332 and a few youths left in charge of the cattle, in order that they may prepare the wells, for the cattle must drink as soon as they arrive in their new quarters. Digging wells is a heavy task. The men begin by chopping out a circle in the bed of the river to define the circumference of the well and then pour water over the hard ground to make digging possible. For the first four to six feet down they cut through black river mud, caked hard for the first two feet or so but softer and moister afterwards. They then strike sand and cut through sand for another twenty to thirty feet till they reach water. All the wells at Yik, like those seen by Wilson at Muōt tōt, were estimated to be from 20 to 30 feet deep, so that Jackson's statement that " There are no wells in the Nuer country—unless a slight excavation of no greater depth than six feet in certain places can be dignifed by this name "† is incorrect. The wells at Yik were about a yard in circumference at the top but lower down they were slightly wider, being funnel-shaped. The sand gets moister the lower the well is dug.

Until a man has dug to some five feet down he can work unaided. Men take it in turn to excavate and throw the mud out of the hole to the surface. When the worker has reached sand an assistant remains at the edge of the well and hauls out the sand in a gourd which has a block of wood running across it and is enclosed in a net. The gourd is lowered by a cord and when filled with sand is hauled to

* Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, p. 140.
† Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

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the surface, the sand being deposited a little way from the mouth of the well. Steps are hollowed out on the opposite sides of the walls at intervals of about two feet.

When water is reached a thick coil of grass tied with twine is lowered to the worker at the bottom and he places it round the sides of the well from the basis to two or three feet up the walls. This is done to prevent sand from falling from the walls into the water. The water is about a foot deep and is clear and fresh.

The work of digging a well takes two or three days. Each *gol*, household, has its own well and each well is surrounded by several circular troughs. A trough (*pany*) is fashioned from the mud excavated from the well. It is about four feet in diameter having a wall a foot high. The wall and floor are pounded hard with a cow's horn, or a bone, to make the trough water-tight, and they are then coated with a layer of sand to keep the water clean and make it attractive to the cattle.

Watering cattle from wells is an unceasing labour. Cattle drink from the troughs as soon as they are loosened in the morning; they return from grazing at midday for another drink, and are watered a third time in the evening before being tethered. Therefore three times a day the troughs have to be filled by the slow process of drawing gourdfuls of water from the well, the gourds being weighted and let down with a cord, and of carrying them to the troughs. Men work late at night to fill the troughs for the morning drink and a large part of the mornings and afternoons are spent in preparing for the midday and evening drinks.

To avoid confusion a man generally loosens a few of his cattle at a time so that they can drink their fill and then give place to others. While they are drinking their masters squat by the side of the trough to prevent any beast from putting its feet in the water and fouling it and to see that it does not damage the walls of the trough. If a cow puts its hoof on the wall or in the water he gives it a sharp rap on the leg with his club. The animals soon understand this rule and meekly circle round the trough, or kneel at the edge of the wall, to

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312 233 drink. Each beast also soon gets to know its special trough and when loosened or when returning from pasture at once makes for it, though when the camp starts there is often confusion, for if an animal approaches a trough that does not belong to its master it is driven away by the owner of the trough and cows are thus driven from trough to trough till they discover the right one and join the other cattle of their household which are drinking there.

[578] On the arrival of a new household at the camp their kinsmen allow them to use their troughs till they have dug their own wells. Frequent disputes take place over wells for a man guards his water jealously. While I was at Yik several persons near Muōt tōt were killed in a fight that started in a dispute about wells.

A boy is placed on duty to watch the troughs all day long and often he plants a thorn bush in the bed of the river near his troughs and throws some grass on its branches so that he may have a little shade in the heat of the day. The lad's main duty is to prevent the sheep and goats from drinking water at the troughs reserved for the cattle for the cattle do not like drinking after them and they foul the water. Sheep and goats either have their own troughs or are allowed to drink when the cattle have had their fill. But as they graze unattended near the camp they may return at any time and try to drink from one of the cattle-troughs. A boy who allows sheep [681 593] and goats belonging to another household to drink the water drawn for his father's cattle is in for a whipping from his elder brother. From the cows are driven away from the precious water. The most other boys will do to warn a sleepy comrade that the water of his trough is being drunk is to sing out " *Caa lil o, caa lil* " and one constantly hears this refrain in the camp. When a boy sings this chant every lad looks to his troughs to make sure that it is not from them that water is being drunk.

312 [515] No washing is allowed from the troughs and if a man wants a bath he must get a comrade to pour water over him at a well-side. Every care is taken to keep the water clean and the wells are frequently inspected. If the water is discoloured a man descends to the bottom,

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cleans it out, and rearranges the grass coil around the sides. The discoloured water is then drawn out in gourdfuls and thrown away. They continue drawing the water till they are satisfied that the well is clean again. Every day the walls of the trough receive a fresh coating of sand and are thus kept smooth and clean. All the work falls to the men and boys. Men, assisted by the bigger boys, dig the wells and make the troughs and draw the water. The smaller boys guard the water. Women and girls only draw water for household purposes. 312 312 462

There were dozens of wells at Yik, the bed of the river having been bored every few yards. As each well supplied two or three troughs the ground was covered with shiny pools. 312

X.

Water is the primary problem of the herdsman's life in Nuerland. A secondary problem, for it arises from excess or insufficiency of water, is pasturage. In their seasonal movements Nuer are not only seeking water but also nourishing grasses and when herdsmen take the cattle from camp to their grazing grounds they do not guide them haphazardly across the plain but drive them to where they know of succulent grasses. The best pastures are often far from camp and the cattle have to be milked early so that they may have time to graze, drink water, chew the cud, and graze again before returning to camp. It is necessary to herd the cattle in the dry season, but Nuer say that it is better to do so at all times of the year though they do not always act accordingly. When I brought one of my cows from Yakwac to Mancom early in the rains it was noticeably thinner than the Mancom cattle. The Mancom people said that the Yakwac cattle do not do so well as their own because the Yakwac people do not herd their cattle in the rains and take them to the best pastures but leave them to graze by themselves. Consequently they graze on the exhausted pasturage near the homesteads. At Mancom a man always accompanied the cattle and took them to the richest grasses. 233

Nuer are great authorities on grasses and know all about their habits and distributions. They never make a mistake in identifying 824 233

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824 233 those grasses which are *wal ghok*, cattle-grasses, and those plants which are eaten regularly by cattle, sheep, and goats or are used for veterinary purposes. One is only given names of plants with hesitation or given different names by different persons when they have no 824 particular value or use. One should not, however, bring leaves and flowers home and ask a Nuer for the names, for this confuses him, but he knows them at once when he sees them growing, as he would normally see them. Not the form of the plant alone but its form together with its habitat enable him quickly to identify it, for some plants are found in gardens, others on sandy ridges, others in the open plain, and others near streams.

824 It is probable that Nuer expansion has to a considerable degree been influenced by the distribution of pasture grasses. I am not 167 a botanist and can only record a few of the main grasses which are 137 found in both Western and Eastern Nuerland without being able to give their distribution in these latitudes. However, Nuer have told me that the reason they did not oust the Ngok Dinka from their enclave was that their pastures are not up to the grazing standards Nuer demand for their cattle. It has also been pointed out to me by Nuer that Shillukland is very poor in grazing grasses, a statement which seems to me, from a very slight acquaintance with Shilluk country, to be true.

137 There are some Nuer grasses the cattle like, some they will eat if 233 they are hungry, and some which they refuse at all times. The richness of pasture varies at different times of the year and in different places and it is these seasonal and local variations which determine Nuer annual, and daily, movements.

132 In the season of *Kwil*, the springtime of the year when the early 137 rains fall, all the grasses either send up new shoots or begin to grow again after several months of arrested growth. This is a season of 233 fatness for the cattle. All the pasture grasses are short and tender and they can choose the most luscious of them and graze on them to their hearts' content. In this time of plenty they nibble the heads of the grasses of which they are not greatly fond while they graze to the ground a favourite grass like *gau* (*Andropogon Gayanus Kunth*).

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But when the rainy season (*tŏt*) is well advanced, grazing becomes more difficult, partly because the country is inundated and partly because some of the best grasses like *dut cieng nath* (*Echinochloa pyramidalis Hitchc. and Chase*) grow tall and rank and are no longer favoured by the cattle, though this particular grass which grows in the open plain and may, perhaps, be regarded as the characteristic grass of Western Nuerland, does not grow so coarse as many others and is the great stand-by of the cattle in a bad year. Other grasses which are eaten in the early rains but become too rank in the middle of the rains to appeal to the cattle are *dik* (*Sorghum dimidiatum stapf*), *dinding* (*Ischaemum brachyatherum Fenzl*), both grasses of the open plains, *yiu* (*Rottboellia exaltata L.f.*), which is found mainly away from streams and grows best on sandy ridges, and when full-grown is covered with spines on account of which it is also called *lep yang*, 'cow's tongue', and *yuol* (*Pennitetum ramosum Schweinf.*) a grass of the open plains which has spiky heads that when it is full grown, run into the eyes of the cattle and make them sore so that they have to be bathed.

Therefore at the height of the rains, especially in a flood year, grazing is often a serious problem and cattle have to rely largely on the short grasses of the village ridges. This is where Lou country has an advantage over the Eastern Jikany districts and why many villages in Western Nuerland are so well placed. Such grasses are *jual jok* 'dog's tail' (*Setaria pallide-fusca Stapf and Hubbard*), and *bogh* (*Eriochloa nubica Hack. and Stapf.*), neither of which cattle relish, though *bogh* is eaten avidly by goats and sheep. Another ridge grass is *muŏth* (*Cynodon Dactylon Pers.*). These grasses are supplemented by grasses of the open plains that grow at the foot of the ridges, particularly *dut cieng nath*, and have been beaten down by rain. In those parts of Nuerland which are not favoured by wide ridges the cattle may starve in a year of very high flood.

Early in the season of *jiom*, the windy season that succeeds the rains and is the first part of the dry season, the grasses dry up and seed. It is not a good time for the cattle since the tall grasses impede their movement, no longer provide succulent pasturage, and may

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shelter beasts of prey. Nuer hasten to burn them as soon as they are dry enough, usually in the latter part of November and in the early part of December. If they are fired too early they are only half burnt and though new shoots spring up the old charred stems remain standing.

Some grasses which cattle eat in the wet season fail to come up after firing till the following rains. Such are *wal* (or *dut*) *lony*, 'lion's grass' which grows in the open plains; an excellent grazing grass called *gogh* (*Brachiaria obtusiflora Stapf*). also of the open plains and favouring shallow depressions; *töl muoth*, also of the open plains and good pasture in the rainy season.

Other grasses send up tender young shoots a few days after they are burnt. Probably this is due to their long roots which tap water held up in the clay beds and it may be partly due also to their clump formation which protects the core of the plants from the flames. If it were not for the fact that some grasses send up new shoots after firing it would be difficult for the cattle to survive. It would, I think, be impossible for them to survive inland in a dry year. Some of the main grasses which come up again, though they do not grow till the next rains, are *twät* (*sporobolus pyramidalis Beauv.*), a grass found mainly near sandy ridges and not greatly favoured by the cattle; *ghol* (*Setaria sp.*) which also the cattle do not much care for; *riëth* (*Setaria Lynesii Stapf and Hubbard*) a grass found mainly along shallow depressions; and *gau*. But the two grasses mainly to be depended on, and both much eaten by cattle, are *dut cieng nath* and a very tall grass, found near streams and pools, called *dut in lum* or *dut jaangni*. Some of the grasses which come up again grow near village sites and are therefore of little use because the cattle are in camps in the open plains, *e.g.*, *twät* and *ghol*. It seems to depend to some extent on the amount of rainfall to what extent grasses send up shoots and in a very dry year grasses which would in a wet year send up shoots may not do so.

After the grasses have been burnt the cattle have a good time as they can wander as they please, being no longer impeded by surface

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water or rank vegetation, and as they can graze on the tender shoots. But when the dry season advances pasture becomes scarcer but cattle can graze again over the shoots. Eventually, however, they have to fall back on marsh grasses, especially in a dry year when such grasses of the plains as *dul cieng naṭh* may fail (it is said *ce tōr* or *ce juac tōr*). Nuer then make for rivers, swamps, lagoons, and deep marshy depressions where they can always find enough vegetation to keep the cattle alive. The chief marsh grasses are *poon* (*Onyza Barthi A. cheval*), *giēk*, *buogh*, and *kuth yang*. Nuer say that no grasses give more milk than these if the cows can obtain them in abundance.

Cattle also eat a number of plants and these are a useful addition to their diet. A good number of such plants, however, grow in cultivations and are therefore not accessible to the cattle, but some spring up in old garden sites and in the neighbourhood of habitations. Nevertheless cattle are grass-grazers and it is mainly sheep and goats which graze on plants, and they eat also the leaves of young trees. Goats will eat almost anything but sheep are daintier feeders and will not touch some of the bitter plants and shrubs that goats devour. The plants eaten by sheep or goats, or by both, generally grow in old cultivations or on old homestead and camp sites. Some of those recorded are *Cak*, 'milk,' so-called because it oozes out a thick white juice when cut, *tiltil* (*Boerhaavia repens L.*) another plant called *tiltil* (*Indigofera Sp.*), *Wangvial* (*Justicia matammensis* (*Schweinf*) *oliv.*), *nār yiawa* (*Emilia sagittata DC*), *mut ngai*, 'spear of the francolin' (*schleria foliosa A. Rich.*), *wōōr* (*Portulaca Quadrifida L.*), *kuthakdeel* (*Glycine Borianii Bak*), *lac* (*Ipomoea replans Poir*), *pac* (*Urochloa a;.*), *nyiōk indil pin*, *tiecdong* (*cyperus rotundus L.*), *tiec*, *belagak gordel*, *kār jaakoak* ('crow's pumpkins'), *thil in cāt*, etc., etc.

XI.

Besides having to adapt themselves to conditions of water supply and vegetation Nuer have to adjust themselves to conditions of insect-life which is an ever-present obstacle to cattle husbandry in their country. The cattle get no rest from stinging flies and ticks from

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233 136 morn till nightfall and in the rainy season they are menaced by mosquitos as soon as the sun sets.

[234] When the rains commence the cattle are taken back to the permanent villages and, as mosquitos become numerous, they are milked towards sunset and then at once tethered in the byres, the doors being closed after them. In the centre of each byre a huge fire of dried dung sends out clouds of smoke so dense that it is impossible for a European to remain there for several minutes. One cannot even see the cattle. One can only hear their movements as they chew the cud (*nyök*) and change their position. The smoke and heat are so oppressive that I have often wondered how either Nuer or their cattle survive the atmosphere night after night. Young men sleep on a platform above the fire and if the smoke becomes less dense one of them descends to stir up the fire and pile on more dung, for as soon as the smoke beings to clear—it escapes through the thatched roof—mosquitos enter. When the cattle are brought into the kraal before sunrise they are sleepy. I suppose that they have not had a very restful night in the stifling atmosphere of the byres. Nuer realize that the heat and smoke of the byres are bad for the cattle but they consider that mosquitos are worse. At the end of the rainy season and at the commencement of the dry season they leave the cattle outside till they go to bed themselves. Then they have to shut them in the byres because they would inevitably be devoured by lions if left all night unguarded in the kraals. They do not make up the fires so high at this time of the year for after the first millet harvest has been reaped mosquitos are far less numerous near the villages, since there is now no standing water and the grasses have been close-cropped on the ridges by the flocks and herds. Later those who still remain in the villages often erect windscreens in the kraals and spend the night with the cattle outside.

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136 The worst months for mosquitos are July, August and September, when there is surface water and when the millet crop is well grown, for swarms of mosquitos shelter beneath the broad leaves of the millet during the heat of the day. As soon as the sun sets one hears Nuer slapping mosquitoes on their bodies as they sit by the kraal

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fires, but they are quickly driven into huts and byres to seek protection amid the smoke of their fires. The doors of the huts are closed tightly, air-holes are blocked, and fires are lit. Mosquito-nets are the only European product, apart from spears, for which the Nuer express any great enthusiasm, but very few, perhaps one in several thousand, possess them.

During my residence at Mancŏm on the Sobat in July, 1935 I was almost eaten alive by mosquitos. My cotton mosquito house afforded me some protection at night but insects soon made holes in it and the mosquitos entered. Moreover, they swarmed outside like a beleaguering army and on my leaving or entering the house battalions invaded it. The worst time was between six and nine o'clock in the morning when hundreds of mosquitos collected in my tent to escape the sun so that it was impossible to sit in it without being repeatedly bitten. One gets little rest, and fever is sooner or later inevitable.

Mosquitos are absent away from pools and river banks in the dry season and even in the vicinity of water—and one must live near water—they are not troublesome from January to May. In the dry season, therefore, the cattle sleep in the open, the herd being surrounded by windscreens in which the Nuer themselves sleep. If a beast of prey approaches people know of its approach by observing that the cattle are restless. The alarm is given and in a moment the whole camp is awake and men rush, with spears in their hands, to the place of danger. I have seen camps awake half the night chasing lions away, for a lion makes many attempts before he acknowledges defeat. But even in the dry season dung fires envelope the camps in smoke at night to protect the cattle from insects.

According to the Nuer it was Woman who first brought mosquitos to the habitations of men. Woman found Mosquito in the open plain and asked him "What do you eat?" Mosquito replied, "Oh! grass. Just nothing." Woman said to him, "Well come home with me and we will share our homestead together" When God heard Woman's words he asked her, "What about your husband?" Woman replied,

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"Oh! He can brush away Mosquito with a bird's wing." God said, "All right." For the first few days Man brushed mosquitos aside. Then he found that it was useless so he suffered them.

136 233

Another unpleasant insect pest is the seroot fly (*rŏm*). Seroot are seasonal. They flourish on cloudy days from May to July. I have not seen them in this latitude from the end of July to the beginning of May. When I was at Konye in May and at Yakwac in July they appeared in swarms every morning shortly before the cattle were driven to pasture, between 9 and 9.30 a.m. At the same hour every morning I was driven from my tent by their painful stings. Fortunately when the cattle go to pasture the seroot flies accompany them. On most mornings at Konye about two hours after being driven to pasture the herd came stampeding back kicking their legs and lashing out with their tails and dung fires had to be lit in the kraal to protect them. There was no need to tether the cattle for they were only too grateful to be allowed to stand near the fires and let the smoke envelope them. Only when there was a shower of rain did they get any relief in the pastures, for rain drives seroot away. On cloudy rainless days the poor beasts ran back to the village covered with seroot and their flanks stained with blood. On such days they were not able to graze for more than two or three hours.

136 232

By August the seroot has gone but the stumoxis (*wuŋ̀*) remains. It is a small black biting fly which is present in the rains and, I think, in the dry season also. It is probably responsible for the presence of trypanosomiasis in parts of Nuerland, transferring the trypanosomes directly on its proboscis from beast to beast, for the tsetse (*mi or luk liec*) does not occur in Nuerland, except perhaps in parts of Eastern Gaajak country, which I have not visited, though its lethal character is well known to Nuer. Indeed they have probably had to take it into account in their expansion eastwards for there can be little doubt that the main reason for their evacuation of Anuakland, which they conquered as far as the foothills of the Abyssinian escarpment was the loss of their cattle from trypanosomiasis carried by tsetse, which occupy a belt of country at the foot of the escarpment whenever dense forest occurs.

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There are other insect pests beside mosquitos, erroot and stumoxis, which annoy the cattle though whether any of them carry disease in this latitude is unknown. The eight-legged cattle ticks (*rak*) attach themselves so firmly to the dewlap, brisket, chest, belly, and udder that their blood-bloated bodies have to be sharply tugged if they are to be dislodged. Nuer remove them frequently in the evenings but not often enough and not systematically enough. There is another insect called *tharkwar* which is said to live on the bodies of cattle though its bite does not cause bleeding.

Personally, of all the insects that abound in African luxuriance in Nuerland I hate most the ordinary black fly, which is like our house fly in appearance. Nuer do not pay much regard to it and they are doubtless less objectionable to the cattle than most insects, though they worry them a good deal in hot weather. These flies settle on one and drive one crazy from dawn till sunset. On trek one is accompanied by an attendant swarm round one's head and shoulders. They do not seem to mind travelling any distance. When one is seated they settle persistently on the exposed parts of one's body. When one is eating they get in the food. All day long one is brushing them away. Their most annoying habit is experienced at sunset when they seek some cavity in one's body in which to spend the night, selecting the ears, nostrils, and eyes for this purpose. They are worst in the middle of the dry season for wet and cold keep them away—probably kill them off—to some extent in the rains and in the windy season that succeeds the rains. In the dry season they are sometimes intolerable. When I was encamped at Mankuac and Biel on the Nyanding River there was very little water, and that fouled, in the pools, and the cattle were dying daily of rinderpest. A man might have thought that every fly in the world had come to live around the pools and to feed on carcases and excreta. In my more bitter moments I used to think of Nuerland as a land where the first mosquitos begin to bite one's legs as the last flies crawl into one's ears and nostrils.

While I am recalling my own experiences of insects I will mention in conclusion the red soldier ants (*mirmir*). I have only seen these

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136 ants in the wooded area near the junction of the Sobat and the Nyanding Rivers and they may be regarded as uncommon in Nuerland, since they are probably found only where there is fairly thick forest. They sometimes get into the byres and the cattle have to be taken outside while efforts are made to drive them away with ashes. When they invaded my camp our efforts were unavailing. We fought them for five days with fire and ashes and water and, though it was the worst time of the year for mosquitos, I was compelled to sleep the last three nights in a deck-chair surrounded by a ring of fire. On the sixth day we gave up the struggle and broke camp.

114 I have ventured to give some of my own experiences because one of the great difficulties of working as an anthropologist, or indeed in any other capacity, in Nuerland, is the constant irritation caused by insects and the exhaustion and sickness that finally ensue. To 233 appreciate what the Nuer have to endure it is well to endure for a while the same torments. While their cattle have to live in such conditions the breed cannot well be improved and the milk yield increased, for they never get any real rest and the continual irritation caused them by insects must greatly lower their vitality and render them an easy prey to disease. In the circumstances their hardiness and endurance is remarkable.

XII.

232 Having had no veterinary training I cannot list all the diseases from which cattle suffer in Nuerland. The most serious scourge is certainly rinderpest (*nyaper, nyaper Dwang, nyanyar mannyuer*).

The usual name in most parts of Nuerland is *nyaper*. It is given a female name because of the supposed female properties of serious epidemics. Similarly, severe cases of smallpox are spoken of as female and light cases as male. A Nuer, with whom Miss Soule was once discussing rinderpest, when asked by her why it had a feminine prefix replied, "Would any man do such a thing as to kill all the cattle?" The wild dog is called *jiok nyaper* and I have been told that it is so called because wild dogs brought rinderpest to the cattle (*cas nyaper ncang diär a kew*).

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232 Nuer know no way of combating rinderpest once it has attacked a herd but they are aware that an infected herd must be isolated. The Lou along the Sobat River in 1931 did their best to prevent any cattle from moving across their grazing grounds from infected districts and seemed well aware that the disease is carried on the hooves of cattle. They may have gained this knowledge from Europeans but Jackson records as early as 1924, when contact with Europeans was very slight: "Diseased skins are sold to the pedlars (Arabic speaking traders from the northern Sudan) who wander through their country. To this fact the Nuer themselves attribute the widespread disease that has taken enormous toll of their herds during the past few years. It is also interesting to note that they believe the disease to be carried on the hooves of the pedlars' donkeys.....The Jekaing, however, in the Bahr el Ghazal Province (Western Jikany) make such stringent quarantine regulations that if a man is known to have eaten of an animal that has died of cattle plague he is not allowed in a district free of the disease."

232 Nuer also try to protect their cattle by splitting up the herd, especially in the dry season, so that if rinderpest breaks out in some 233 districts and is not carried to every district, only part of the herd is affected. Thus a man may keep some of his cattle in camp at the inland pool of *Mwöt dit* while his son takes two or three animals to the Geni River and one or two cows are placed with a relative-in-law in Gaawär country or in the Dinka swamps. Likewise many men who camp on the Sobat leave some of their cattle at inland pools at Nyarol.

232 Nuer are aware that if an animal recovers from rinderpest it is immune from future attacks and greatly value such beasts. They are also aware that immunity of a cow does not mean immunity for its calves.

Rinderpest causes havoc among the herds and it is a bitter experience to live among the Nuer when their cattle are infected. They can only look on helplessly, more morose and resigned than ever, while it destroys some two thirds of their beasts. Youths see

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232 [181] their chance of marrying in the near future vanish and everyone is threatened with hunger and poverty. When we consider all that cattle mean to Nuer it is easy to imagine their grief and forebodings. But they do not show grief or express forebodings. They do not let one see what they suffer. They meet disaster with calm mien and speak of their loss with philosophic detachment.

Next to rinderpest the most serious contagious disease is probably bovine pleuro-pneumonia (*jɔ̈ɔdapuɔ̈th, jɔ̈k puɔ̈thɛ̈, jɔk nya puɔ̈th dɔ̈ɔ̈*). In some years it causes heavy mortality among the herds. Nuer treat it by chewing certain leaves or bark and blowing them up the nostrils of sick animals.

Among the Eastern Jikany—and perhaps in other parts of Nuerland—though I am uncertain of this—cattle sometimes die of trypanosomiasis (*nɔɔ jɔ̈klaɛ*). As already explained tsetse is not the carrier but biting flies, probably stumoxis and perhaps, seroot, are responsible for direct transmission. What effect this mode of transmission has on the trypanosomes does not appear to be known, but it is evident that the disease must be to some extent endemic and that it manifests itself only in periods of low vitality, as in years of heavy floods or of exceptional drought. Mr. Corfield tells me that among the Eastern Jikany an animal showing signs of trypanosomiasis is burnt across the back with a piece of red-hot iron, probably a heated spearhead: "Firing marks are about six inches across, three inches on each side of the spine and extend from the withers, below the hump, almost to the root of the tail." This treatment, presumably, is useless.

There is a disease called *kɔ̈ɔ̈n*, probably ringworm, which causes sores all over the body. Nuer treat it by pounding the dung of ostriches and hyaenas and dusting the sores with this powder. Another disease is called *dɔ̈ɔ̈ny*. Its symptoms are unknown but the treatment is to tie a strip of buffalo's or tiang's skin round the cow's neck and to tether it in the sun without food or water for two or three days. This is said to cure it. *Dät*, probably, 'foul on the foot,' is a disease

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of the hooves which is often fatal. Another disease of unknown symptoms is *fuc* (*fuc nyaciar, nyaciar*). There is a disease called *kec* which is treated by the animals ears, and sometimes its horns also, being cut with a spear heated in the fire (*ke kec tem kä mac*). This sickness causes abscesses in the ears which are therefore scraped out. It also causes the horns to become hollow and if this is found to be the case the horns are either cut or bored. 232

Goats and sheep have their special diseases: *fuuynaiu*, probably sheep-pox, *wiicwuny*, fluke, in which the liver and gall-bladder are enlarged and full of sores, etc. They also suffer from trypanosomiasis.

Jök is a generic name for all diseases of cattle, sheep and goats. The word may be incorporated from the Dinka and some expressions in which it figures, *e.g.*, *jöndapuiith*, bovine pleural-pneumonia, show very clearly Dinka construction. The kind of *jök* which is afflicting the cattle is specified in the names of different diseases or in different names for the same disease, *e.g.*, *jondapuith*, *jökkaar*, *jökdiu*, *jok nyuntiel*, and *jok nyanjut*. Nuer appear to regard contagious diseases of cattle as spirits which suddenly come, for no apparent reason, as diseases of men come. Nuer say that they are spirits sent by God. They say "*Ce jok kuu piny, cas kam piny e kuik*," "The disease has come to earth, it is brought to earth by God."

Besides veterinary medicines used to cure sickness, some of which may have therapeutic properties and be considered drugs, Nuer possess medicines which are used for other purposes than to cure sickness and we probably do not wrongly assess their value when we say it is purely of a magical order. Such are the medicines placed in churning gourds and churned with the milk to ensure a good supply of cheese. The roots of the following plants were recorded as having this use: *Cancun*, (*Trianthema pentandra*) *gitkiual*, *kuäk*. The seeds of a sweet smelling plant that grows on camp and village sites called *miöth* (*Ocimum americanum L.*), are boiled with the cheese to make it sweet and keep long. 232 789 251 789

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232 Before a cow is taken to a bull to be served the root of a plant called *rialm* (*Clitoria Ternatea L.*) is chewed and blown up its nostrils to ensure conception. A plant called *när teyänga* (*wal thiöra yang*) is given in an infusion to be swallowed by a cow which has aborted its calf. An infusion made from a plant called *tam kuir* is administered to cows which are milk-bound. An infusion from the *dep gawy* plant is given to a cow which retains the afterbirth and an infusion from the stalks of the *cancan* creeper is given to a cow which refuses to suckle its calf.

Nuer love to hear their favourite oxen lowing and Mr. Corfield tells me that among the Eastern Jikany to induce an ox to low they take the feathers of the ground hornbill (*ruweyuat*), a bird which has a deep-toned booming call, and after grinding them and mixing them with water, give them to their oxen to drink. Better still, if the whole bird can be obtained, its innards are used in this way instead of its feathers. Another bird used for the same purpose is the African cuckoo (*kuei kiöloir*).

The usual ways of administering medicines to cattle are to give them in an infusion through the mouth or to chew them and blow them up the nostrils (*liang yang*).

[789] There are very few cattle medicines. Indeed, the Nuer, like other Nilotic peoples are very deficient in all forms of magic and in those situations where ritual is employed the ghosts or the spirits are invoked.

The only wounds of cattle which I have seen treated are broken horns. It sometimes happens that a cow or ox is horned by another in a byre and in turning to get out of the way it cracks its horns against one of the big trunks that support the roof of the byre and breaks one of them. Nuer fear lest the animal may die since there is rain everyday and, in the early part of the wet season, many flies. They cover the wound with *dil kuak*, the brown sooty deposit which collects over the wood and thatch of byres when fires have burnt in them for some years.

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XIII.

Although there is more food in the rains the young men prefer the dry season for they can then spend all day in close association with their comrades and there is plenty of opportunity and leisure for dancing, flirting and displaying themselves before girls from other villages. In the dry season also people can sleep outdoors in the open air with their cattle, for there are few mosquitos. The dry season is also the time for fishing in pools, rivers, and lagoons, and this occupation gives amusement as well as providing tasty and nourishing food. Tiop told me "When the north wind blows at the end of the rains the young men rejoice because the windy season has come. Now they can sleep outside and there are no mosquitos. Now the whole land is burnt and a man can see over the countryside in every direction. Now a man can go out fishing by himself and may be he will not return to camp at night but will sleep on the river-bank. Now they drive the cattle to distant pastures. Only the old men prefer the rains because their bellies are then filled with millet and maize and beer: but the young men rejoice when the north wind blows."

A Western Nuer said "The dry season is good, for then you kill hippopotami and animals of the open plains, and there is the *dompiey* dance and flirting with the girls and jumping and singing behind your oxen. The wet season is good also for then there is plenty of millet, food and beer. Both seasons are good."

As camp life is not everywhere exactly the same it is easier for me to describe the life of members of a section of the Lou tribe who collected at Yakwac on the Sobat River in 1931, as they do every year, and to make comments which will denote certain differences between the mode of life I observed during a lengthy residence there and modes of life observed at dry season camps in other parts of Nuerland.

Camp life is monotonous and drives an anthropologist to despair as nothing unusual happens. Nuer are not eager to fight at this time of the year and marriage, mortuary, and initiation ceremonies are normally held during, or at the end of, the rains, when millet and beer are plentiful. I have spent weeks in camps watching the same daily round. A description of one day serves for any day.

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221 Hunger is partly responsible for the low pulse of life at this season. As has been explained, Nuer cultivate little and in most districts, especially in Lou country, they have to husband their grain if it is not to be exhausted long before the new harvest has ripened. They leave most of the grain in their wet season villages for seed and to support themselves during the hungry weeks that last from sowing to harvest time. They do not carry much millet to the camps so that they have to use it sparingly, though, if the camps are only a day or two away from the villages, women will sometimes return to get further supplies from the village granaries. When the dry season is well advanced the cows often cannot obtain sufficient pasturage of a nourishing quality and give little milk. Those Nuer who camp at the edge of inland pools and lagoons can supplement their diet with fish, but on the Sobat we only had what few fish boys could spear in the shallows and the yield of harpooning from our single canoe. From time to time members of our camp managed to kill wild beasts: gazelle, cob, tiang and giraffe. Otherwise our meat supply was limited to an occasional ox or cow which died and to blood from the necks of cows.

805 223 Camp life is regulated by requirements of the cattle and Nuer speak of periods of the day by reference to pastoral tasks rather than to the course of the sun, *e.g.*, they say that they will do something at the time of milking, or after the cattle are driven to pasture, or when the calves return to camp. The camp time-table varies little from day to day. It is approximately as follows:—

512 234

A.M.

6.00 Everybody rises.

6.45 The cows are milked.

8.00 The cattle are driven to pasture, the kraal is cleaned and the morning meal is served.

8.15 Goats and sheep are milked and taken to pasture.

P.M.

4.30 Calves, sheep and goats are brought back to camp.

5.00 Cows which have recently calved come running home.

5.30 The herd returns and the cows are milked.

7.30 The evening meal is served.

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Everyone wakes before sunrise and satisfies the needs of nature. For about three quarters of an hour after sunrise men sit by their hearths protected by windscreens and women outside their beehive grass huts chatting, smoking and gazing at the cattle which lie, still sleeping, many with their muzzles tucked into their barrels, and chew the cud. Being close together they rub their bodies against one another and lick each other. They present a medley of colour: fawn, grey, mouse, black, brown, blue and chestnut-roan, with many variations of shade and distribution. 512

The huts and windscreens are generally erected in a semi-circle with their backs to the prevailing wind, though they sometimes form an almost complete circle and at other times are arranged in lines. Windscreens are of simple construction. A narrow trench is dug for three quarters of a circle and handfuls of grass are planted, root downwards into the trench. Each handful is beaten tightly against the last one so that a solid screen of grass is formed. The grasses generally used for this purpose are *dut in lum*, a tall coarse riverside grass called *wath* (*Sorghum lanceolatum Stapf.*) and *war* (*Vetiveria nigritiana Stapf*). Where camps are made near villages millet stalks are sometimes used instead of grass. All these grasses are tall and sturdy and they bend to the wind and do not break. Men sleep in the shelter of these screens on the hearths which occupy the whole of the enclosed space. Here the fire is never allowed to go out, and from day to day the height of the hearth is slowly raised by accumulation of ashes. Women make huts in the same way as men make windscreens but they bend the tops of the grasses so that they meet. They are then tied together and the sides are plastered with cattle dung. Within these flimsy shelters, which contrast with the massive byres and well-built huts of their wet season villages Nuer spend about half the year. Sometimes, as at Yakwac, a camp is made in a wet season village belonging to kinsmen at the edge of a river. Then the men desert their windscreens at midday for the cool interiors of the byres and the women sleep at night in the village huts instead of erecting special grass huts. But even when, as in certain parts of Nuerland where there is no great deficiency of water 361 343 342 [512 513] 361

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361 or dearth of pasturage, the people remain on their village sites or move only a short distance from them, they insist on making a camp nearby, for such is the ancient dry-season custom.

342 The windscreen (*geau*) does not seem to be used in Western Nuerland. In the camps I have seen there both sexes live in grass huts plastered with dung, the huts of married couples being rather larger than those occupied by youths or girls. The huts appear also to be more carefully constructed than in Eastern Nuerland. In
343 Nuer camps one sometimes sees a rough shelter (*geau dawi*) constructed of branches with grass, often the riverside *buor*, thrown on top to give shade for the young calves during the heat of the day. Otherwise they are taken into the huts or tethered beneath a tree.

233 In the front of the windscreens are tethered the cattle. When they are grazing the kraal is a circle studded with pegs and sprinkled with drying dung. When they come back in the evening they are tethered to these pegs. Adult cattle are placed in the centre of the kraal, the calves on the outside nearest to the windscreens where they are under the watchful eyes of their owners, and the sheep and goats in small clusters here and there between the adult cattle and the calves. Oxen of enormous size, with great spreading horns trained into artificial shapes, stand docile and lethargic, prominent among the other cattle. A man places his favourite ox in a line with the entrance to his windscreen so that he can see it without moving.

234 Before and during milking youths display themselves in company
983 with their favourite oxen. Boys lead the oxen round the camp and their young owners walk behind them brandishing their spears and leaping gracefully into the air, shouting and singing the while. This display is called *rav* and is one of the customs of dry season camps. It is not practised in wet season villages because a youth does not show off before his own family but when he has a large audience, including girls whose favours he wishes to win. Youths often continue to display themselves till the cattle are driven to pasture.

234 Milking starts between 6-30 and 7-00. If the morning is misty
462 it may be delayed till slightly later. As men are forbidden to milk

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they sit in their windscreens while the women and boys milk the cows. This task takes about half an hour and the cattle then remain for a while tethered to their pegs. Each household milks its own cows and if there are strong boys and girls they do most of the work, leaving the married women to cook and attend to their babies, but adult women milk troublesome cows which require experience and firm handling and if they have no adolescent sons and daughters have to milk all the cows of their household. 234 462 512

Between 7-30 and 8-0 the cattle are taken to pasture. If some of the beasts are loosened before milking is finished they do not leave the herd but wait nearby the kraal till they are driven out with the herd. By this time the sun is high in the heavens. When there is good pasturage near the camp they may not be loosened till 9-0—10-0 o'clock because they will have plenty of time to eat their fill before sunset. Mr. Corfield tells me that they are generally taken to pasture at this late hour among the Eastern Jikany whose country is not so arid as that of the Lou. I gathered from statements of Western Nuer that in their country it is customary for the cattle to be loosened even later in the day. 233 512

No one gives an order for the cattle to be loosened but when all the cows have been milked someone begins to loosen his cattle and the others follow suit, the oxen being loosened last. The herdsmen for the day take them out of the kraal. Usually several men accompany the cattle for a short distance but some of these return to camp and only two or three men spend the day with them in the grazing grounds. Each household in turn provides a herdsman and the men who herded the cattle today arrange with others to herd them tomorrow. The adult occupants of each windscreen must take their turns as herdsmen. After being loosened, some beasts make at once for nearby water while others wait till they have reached their grazing grounds and drink there, for, about midday, the herdsmen accompany them to a pool. If water is near the cattle make their way to it, but if it is distant they have to be driven there. Herding is considered a hardship and is conducted by young adults. They have to keep a close watch over the cattle during the heat of the day in case they wander and

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233 512 [533] they may have to defend them against carnivorous beasts and human raiders. Often they relieve the monotony and solitude by composing and chanting songs. Nuer say that most songs are invented in the grazing grounds. Herdsmen have a quick meal before leaving camp [264] and, except when there are plenty of *kaglig* fruits in the early part of the dry season, they will not have another bite till after sunset. However hungry he might feel no herdsman would milk a cow.

512 462 234 237 After the cattle have left camp the day is closed for the men, as far as routine cattle tasks are concerned, till they are brought back to the kraal in the evening; but women and boys continue their labours. Women milk the goats and sheep and prepare the morning meal. Boys spread out the cattle dung that has collected overnight so that it may dry in the sun and furnish fuel to replenish the household fires at night. They also smooth the part of the kraal occupied by their beasts by rubbing over the earth the nightly residue of ashes, urine, and dung. Boys assist in milking the goats and in taking the small calves to shade. They then take the larger calves and the [233] flocks to pasture. Older boys herd the calves and younger boys look after the flocks in the vicinity of the kraal. They spend most of the day playing games. If a small boy is hungry he catches a she-goat [857] and milks it, holding it by the horns with one hand while he puts its udder and squeezes its teats with the other hand from which he then licks the milk. Or he may suckle it. People do not object to small boys milking the goats they are herding. They are small and hungry and need all the food they can get to grow into strong men.

512 462 224 Not all the adult men have been idle while their womenfolk and the boys have been cleaning the kraal and milking. On most mornings parties of two and three leave camp at dawn with their dogs to pick up a gazelle or other small animal. They do not return to camp till after milking is finished, and those who set out at dawn to inspect their giraffe traps return about the same time. After the cattle have been loosened the men potter about for a couple of hours. Generally some of them are engaged in making utensils and ornaments or in dressing their hair.

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Much attention is devoted to hair-dressing in the dry season. In the rains the hair is sometimes neglected though never for a long time unless a man is in mourning. Nuer hair is naturally crinkly and black but when treated with ashes of cattle dung mixed with wood ash it is oxidised and becomes straight and golden. A man takes a heap of ash from his wind-screen fire, mixes it with wood ash, and places them on his sleeping skin where he removes any lumps, leaving only fine ash. To make the ashes finer still he beats them with a mallet and shakes and taps the skin so that the ashes are spread over it and can be searched for foreign matter which is then extracted. When he is satisfied he divides the ashes into two heaps, one of which he mixes with water. The Eastern Nuer do not use urine for this purpose as the Dinka and, to a lesser extent, the Western Nuer do. The scalp is now massaged with the damp ashes. When this is finished the hair is gathered into a peak at the back or front of the head and the dry ashes are sprinkled on top. The head remains for two or three days in its ash plaster which is then removed and the hair is sprinkled with oil. Nuer hair freshly treated in this way has a golden tint and glistens in the sun. Young men spend many hours in their wind-screens, after the cattle have gone to pasture, preparing their hair in this way. 362

By about 10 o'clock most of the men are sleeping behind their wind-screens, beneath trees, or, if the camp is near a wet season village, in byres. Only if game is sighted is there any male activity in the camp for an hour or two before noontide. The men grasp their spears and with their dogs sprint after the animal to encircle it and run it down. After the first rains all able-bodied men leave camp to search for giraffe-tracks and if they find the animals they pursue them till they are exhausted and overtaken and speared. Nuer sometimes chase giraffe all day long and their endurance will scarcely be believed till it is seen, being especially remarkable when we recollect that they are weakened by hunger at this time of the year. But at the height of the dry season it is useless to hunt giraffe as they are too fleet on hard ground. While the men are sleeping the women are engaged in churning last night's milk. 512 462 224 [274]

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512 About noon youths and maidens bathe in the river wherever a
726 shallow sandy stretch offers a clear playground. They do the same
883 at inland lakes but much time is there given also to fishing. The young people sit and splash in the water and the sexes flirt and wrestle in and out of the water. At about 2.30 they return to the camp where the girls churn the morning milk and pound and grind millet for the evening meal. The men turn over the drying dung with their sticks and then, having nothing more they need attend to, most of them return to their windscreens though one or two youths may try and spear fish in the shallows and they are joined there by older boys who are not herding the calves.

512 About 4-30 p.m. the small calves are brought from the shade
233 where they have spent the day and are tethered in the kraal. The
237 men hold them between their legs and lifting up their heads compel them to swallow water. At this time the boys bring back the larger
372 calves and goats and sheep from grazing. Members of each household tether their animals. Generally one or two men now go out to meet (*jaw*) the returning herd. Others gather the dried dung on hides from the heaps into which boys have swept it, and each owner of a windscreen makes up the evening fire on his hearth. There is no need to light the fires as they have been smouldering all day long and it is only necessary to clear away surface ashes and heap the new fuel on the exposed embers. Dense clouds of smoke arise and envelope the camp.

512 By 5 o'clock cows which have recently calved come running
233 home and herald the approach of the herd which appears from 15 to
462 30 minutes later. Adult men tether the cattle of their household and women and boys commence at once to milk the cows and they
264 finish this work before sunset. The women then prepare the evening meal and finish their dairy work. The men sit in their windscreens and await the meal which is served between 7 and 8 p.m. Nuer eat twice a day: in the morning and in the evening. The evening meal consists of millet porridge, with cheese or butter, or both, poured over it. The morning meal is generally the remains of supper heated up or with hot milk poured over it.

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In a big camp there is often dancing at night and youths and girls pay evening visits to neighbouring camps to take part in the dances. There is a special dry season dance quite different from the drum dances of the wet season. It is called *dompiny*. A small hole is dug in the dancing place and a piece of hide is stretched tightly across it. A length of cord is stretched over the hide and is pegged on either side of it. A small stick is placed on the hide over the centre of the hole and the cord is supported by the top of the stick and slopes on either side of it to the ground. The cord is thus kept taught. The hole acts as a sounding box. The performer obtains music by striking the cord with a thin stick held in his right hand as he sits cross-legged before it and by muting it with his left hand or with a stick held in his left hand. By this means he produces rhythm. Sometimes another man beats at the same time with his hand on the hide near the sounding hole. The people dance and sing, men dancing opposite women. A man holds his hands above his head like an ox's horns and as he sings he steps backwards and the girls opposite him move towards him. They thus circle round the musical instrument.

Girls sometimes have their own singing parties in these camps. They sit and sing to a rhythm made by slapping their outstretched thighs. This is called *paipat*. Youths who are courting the girls often join them and take part in the singing. It is customary for young men to visit girls and court them when the day's work is done.

If there is no dancing at night—and in the smaller camps where there are few girls, and these mostly kinswomen, the young men do not care to start a dance—the inmates of the camp chat in their windscreens and at the thresholds of their huts for an hour or two after the evening meal and then fall off to sleep. Sometimes they chat till close on midnight and occasionally a man who is happy walks amid the cattle, ringing an ox-bell and singing for an hour or more. Sometimes an animal has strayed from the herd. Then everyone is sad and its owners are out in the bush till late at night searching for it.

One day in a Nuer cattle camp is like another. Calves are born and we see time passing in the stages of their growth. Nor does life

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vary much from month to month for there are few seasonal changes at this time of the year. As the river falls it is possible to fish in lagoons and shallows and to bathe on its sandy bed. Then the lagoons dry up. When the river rises fish swim in the weeds and rushes and along some streams they are easily speared from the banks. The banks of the Sobat are too steep for this purpose. There are no longer shallows and bathing is a hasty dip for there is danger from crocodiles. The grazing grounds are changed from time to time as they become exhausted and as streams and lagoons dry up. At Yakwac there was succulent pasturage only where marsh plants still retained their moisture at the river end of lagoons. The people are still in camp when the first rains fall at the end of April or early in May and then there is everywhere an abundance of pasturage. The brown bush becomes green and the baked fissured earth a sudden mire. Dry lagoons become inland flowing streams. The scorching sun is clouded.

On the Sobat we guessed that the first rains had fallen inland by the migration of wild animals from its banks. Giraffe now left us for inland pastures where they would not have to face death every time they approached the river. Other animals likewise moved southwards, even the gazelle. On the northern bank, however, buffaloes still came to the river to drink and were attacked by hungry Nuer. Animals and men must obey the seasons and when there is no water except in inland lakes and lagoons, men, cattle, and wild beasts must drink at the same places. One can hear them at night cautiously coming to the pools to drink. When the rains come all leave for new pastures.

In May one knows that the move back to the wet season villages will shortly take place not only by cloudy skies and movements of game, but also by camp activities. The women are the first to leave camp and one meets them along paths, carrying their household goods in rectangular cane baskets. Youths leave camp early in the morning to cut stakes, generally of thornwood (*bwoc*) and they spend a large part of the day shaping them into tethering pegs. They also twist new cord. The weather being cooler people do not feel so keenly the need to sleep towards noon. Everyone is becoming restless and

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anxious to start for the wet season villages. At the beginning of June the camps nearest to ours, those at Dengatwor and Wecgin, broke up and our companions at Yakwac began to move inland a few days later.

The dry season (*mat*) is over and the wet season (*tit*) has begun. The camp (*wec*) is broken up and the village (*piang*) is occupied once more. The long idle days are ended and men and women turn to strenuous work in their gardens.